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MEXICAN SUSPECT

26 March 1982

SAN DIEGO (AP) -- U.S. ATTORNEY WILLIAM KENNEDY SAYS HE HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO PROSECUTE A FORMER MEXICAN OFFICIAL IN AN $8 MILLION STOLEN CAR CASE BECAUSE THE MAN IS CONSIDERED THE CIA'S ''MOST IMPORTANT SOURCE IN MEXICO AND CENTRAL AMERICA.''

KENNEDY SAID MIGUEL NASSAR HARO, WHO HEADED MEXICO'S FEDERAL SECURITY AGENCY UNTIL JANUARY, HAS BEEN IMPLICATED BY U.S. INVESTIGATORS IN A RING THAT HAS STOLEN $8.4 MILLION IN CARS IN SAN DIEGO AND ORANGE COUNTIES AND SMUGGLED THEM INTO MEXICO.

IN AN INTERVIEW PUBLISHED TODAY IN THE SAN DIEGO UNION, KENNEDY SAID PROSECUTION OF NASSAR WAS RECOMMENDED LAST NOVEMBER, BUT THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT HAS NOT DECIDED THE MATTER YET BECAUSE OF CONCERNS EXPRESSED BY THE CIA AND THE FBI'S LEGAL ATTACHE IN MEXICO CITY, GORDON MCGINLEY.

THE PAPER SAID MCGINLEY AND A CIA AGENT IDENTIFIED ONLY AS MAX WERE AT A MEETING IN MEXICO CITY LAST JULY 25 WHERE NASSAR WAS DESCRIBED AS ''ABSOLUTELY INDISPENSABLE.'' AT THAT MEETING, THE PAPER SAID, U.S. EMBASSY AND JUSTICE DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS WERE TOLD, ''IF WE LOST HIM, IT WOULD BE A DISASTER.''

KENNEDY SAID, ''I REALIZE THIS MUST BE FACTORED IN, BUT I'M CONCERNED ABOUT THE VICTIMS -- CAR OWNERS OR THE INSURANCE COMPANIES THAT HAVE PAID OFF CLAIMS.

''WE REPEATEDLY HAVE VOICED THE VIEW THAT PROSECUTION MUST PROCEED,'' HE SAID. ''NO ONE HAS SAID THESE INDICTMENTS CANNOT BE RETURNED, BUT IT IS STILL A MATTER OF CONCERN AND DEBATE IN WASHINGTON.''

KENNEDY SAID HE WAS TOLD A MEETING WAS SCHEDULED TODAY IN WASHINGTON, D.C., BETWEEN THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT AND CIA OFFICIALS TO RESOLVE THE IMPASSE.

HOWEVER, THE UNION SAID IT LEARNED THAT THE CIA LOST INTEREST IN NASSAR AFTER HE LEFT HIS SECURITY DIRECTORSHIP IN MEXICO AND THE AGENCY SAYS IT IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR DELAYING HIS PROSECUTION.

THE PAPER SAID U.S. AMBASSADOR JOHN GAVIN HAS ATTENDED TOP-LEVEL MEETINGS IN MEXICO CITY AND WASHINGTON TO DISCUSS POSSIBLE PROSECUTION OF NASSAR, WHOSE WHEREABOUTS ARE UNKNOWN.
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